



Smuggler's Dawn



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Chapter 1 by Danny Rerucha

"The Argonautica lies on the horizon captain!"

This nervous proclamation shattered the silence of the night, and within seconds the Smuggler's Dawn was alive with the sounds of an inexperienced crew. Men were searching frantically for their positions aboard the vessel, stumbling beneath the glow of the full moon. The ship rocked violently with the sudden surge of movement on deck. The hull moaned, the waves crashed, and the winds grew stronger. The sailors raised their voices to be heard over the increasingly fierce weather. Bodies, barrels, and bottles flew through the air as the sea crashed down around them. Fear and confusion were leading the crew of the Smuggler's Dawn.

Chapter 2 by Tish



The first mate's voice could be heard above the wind, barking orders, sending a semblance of confident authority to the closest men. At one point, Mandrake sighed and rolled his eyes. This new batch of landlubbers they'd taken on at the last port, they were more likely to fall overboard before they could become cannon fodder.

He wondered, not for the first time, how he'd gotten roped into babysitting a bunch of grown men, and then the captain strode in front of him. She was beautiful, and she was the reason he'd signed up again. Never mind that she didn't respond to his advances, or anyone else's for that matter; one could always hope.

Captain Bailey was not afraid to get her boots wet, as the saying went, and she let him worry

about the overall state of the ship as she strode from bow to stern and back, pulling a rope here, staving a rope there, constantly. See more of Story Wars

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under his breath. If they should lose the Argonautica, he would personally throw everyone overboard.

The wind picked up, and a few more barrels rolled off the ship. Mandrake swore again and continued shouting orders. The sailors jumped to obey as if in fear for their lives.

The captain glanced over her shoulder at him. He looked out at the other ship again, then crossed to port to talk to his superior officer.

"Captain, we're not going to make it! The Argonautica must have seen us by now, and we're in no shape to give chase, let alone try to board her!"

"That's what I like about you, Mandrake, your tireless optimism!" To his indignation, the captain patted his cheek. "All ahead full!" she shouted. "Argonautica or Davy Jones!"

Chapter 3 by Luke Meyers



The wind whipped up, and the Dawn caught it perfectly. Captain Bailey's trimming had been spot-on; Mandrake always boggled at her instincts. The Dawn's prow tore through the waves and bore down on Argonautica, closing distance faster than before. Bailey's eye was pressed to her battered brass spyglass, intent on prey.

Keeping one eye on the crew, Mandrake watched the Captain closely for a sign. Her brow furrowed somewhat, and she began scanning from side to side.

"What is it, Captain? What do you see?"

"Nothing. No crew. I don't see a soul."

"That's a hell of a thing. It can't be that easy, can it?"

"No, it can't. Something's wrong; I just don't know what. Doesn't matter, though; we're not stopping."

Chapter 4 by Windlion

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"Let's wake them up!" the
was he. She had pulled off
opponent.

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or being irritated, and so
ns were ready, and, no

"On the foc'sle! Six rounds with your carronades, aim for the rudder!" she cried. In a minute, the small guns barked and sent their rounds smashing into the Argonautica's rudder post.

Nothing. The Dawn was pulling up too close to their opponent's broadside, Mandrake noted, and ordered the men aloft to be ready to trim sail before the Captain turned and gave him the order. She frowned at him — an error, anticipating her command — and he nodded apology.

"Under way, sails set. Gun ports closed. No one on deck, no one on the helm. Your thoughts, First Mate?" She was scanning the ship with her spyglass.

"Waiting below for us to board, Captain, planning to roll out their guns while we are engaged? Overcome by the plague? Muti —"

She cut him off. "Ah! The deck before the mainmast!" She turned and handed him the glass. "And fresh blood on the shackles."

He shook his head in admiration of her talents before raising the glass to confirm what she had seen. "Aye. A mutiny, then, when their captain tried too hard to control with the lash. Should we board, then?"

Chapter 5 by Glendo



Mandrake stood silently for a few seconds as the Hull groaned and the moon's pale glow rested on the Captain's furrowed brow. If the crew of the Argonautica were in a state of disarray, then that surely indicated a swift victory.

But the Captain's reply indicated otherwise.

"Are you mad?" Her question came abruptly, and Mandrake almost jumped. "That is the Argonautica, the only ship to have navigated Shallow's Deep unscathed, and you think its crew will let us board?"

The first mate sputtered a few meaningless syllables before he could respond properly.

"Then what should we do, Captain?"

Captain Bailey grinned.

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"Why, we board, of course!"

Mandrake stood, paralysed in confusion, trying to imagine what the mind of someone like the Captain looked like; a mind that saw the illogical and the futile yet still grasped for it. A ship of legend, bested by landlubbers and cowards? Yet these were the makings of new myths, if they could pull it off.

The Captain rallied the crewmen, raising her cutlass to a sky choked with fog. As the Smuggler's Dawn drew up alongside the Argonautica and the planks were deployed, the jubilant cries of twenty men turned into the rattle of a hundred defiant shouts in the night.

The crew of the Smuggler's Dawn had donned the mantle of the storm, charging relentlessly onto the deck of destiny. Mandrake followed, still cautious, but amazed at the Captain's unceasing bravery. She blasted down the doors leading below deck and signalled for the others to join her, delighting in the insanity of their goal. Never in history had anyone contested command of the Argonautica, not since Jason himself stepped foot on its deck. None had survived that dared to try. And yet there she was, brandishing the cutlass, laughing in the face of impossibility-

Until the crew discovered what hid beneath the deck.

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